

Instructional Strategies and Models Supporting Comprehension

Strategies

- **The Read-aloud**

A nonfiction Read-aloud is simply reading aloud to your students. Read-alouds of informative, expository prose can be very brief, sharing as little as a sentence and illustration, or a single paragraph. When you are looking for good models to share and discuss with your students, look for: a) passages that address concepts that fit into curriculum content across disciplines; and b) passages that are well-written, especially in terms of how the author(s) announced and supported his/her major points. One of the major instructional purposes of the nonfiction Read-aloud is to provide an opportunity for students to learn science, social studies, mathematics, and other curriculum concepts. Our long-term goal, however, is for students to use similar text as learners and independent readers. (Emily Calhoun, Revised 2001.)

- **The Talk-aloud**

Talk-alouds provide an opportunity to model the reading/writing connection, so students can “see” and hear how an experienced and skillful reader relates to and uses what the author has provided. The text used may be only an illustration, a sentence, or several pages. Talk-alouds often include mentioning something you noticed or appreciated about the text. Comments may include discussing what you noticed about the relationship between the cover, the title, and the first line, and how they all worked together to announce the primary message of the book. Or, you might address what you noticed about how the author organized the text to get across the message. It is during Talk-alouds that we can address anything that relates to the communication loop between the author and the reader (the reader/writer connection). Our long-range instructional purpose for Talk-alouds is to have students be aware of and use the reader/writer connection themselves. Thus, while every teacher Talk-aloud does not need to be followed by student Talk-alouds, enough practice must be provided for students to learn to use the strategy themselves. (Emily Calhoun, Revised 2001.)

- **The Think-aloud**

Think-alouds provide an opportunity to share with students your use of comprehension processes or strategies as you gather meaning from and use written text. In nonfiction Think-alouds, this may include how you determine the main idea or the author’s purpose, use the author’s organization of text, access and use prior knowledge, and how reading often creates new questions for us to answer. Essentially, you are modeling for students how you gather meaning from text, explicitly telling/modeling for students the comprehension process or strategy you are using to understand the author’s message. This also includes how you think about or approach the task of gathering meaning using that strategy. One of the major instructional purposes for using nonfiction Think-alouds is to model the use of reading comprehension



processes and strategies for students; however, our long-range goal is to have students use these processes and strategies themselves. In order to do this, they need many practice opportunities doing their own Think-alouds across a wide range of text. (Emily Calhoun, Revised 2001.)

- **Constructing Visual Representations**

Visual representations (graphic organizers) are tools to help students organize their understanding and recall of important ideas in the areas of vocabulary development and comprehension.

A graphic organizer is a visual representation of knowledge, a way of structuring information, and of arranging essential aspects of an idea or topic into a pattern using labels (Bromley, Irwin-DeVitis, & Modlo, 1995). Flood and Lapp (1988) use the term 'mapping' generally to describe any illustrative material that helps children learn from texts. These materials could include charts, graphs, maps, flowcharts, or other structures that help one visualize the materials in texts (Egan, 1999).

- **Attending to Story and Text Structure**

Story structure refers to the way the content and events of a story are organized into a plot. Narrative texts tell stories that usually follow a familiar story structure. In story structure instruction, students learn to identify the categories of content. Instruction in the content and organization of stories improves students' comprehension and memory of stories (National Institute of Literacy, 2001).

- **Question-Answer Relationships (QAR)**

QAR is a reading strategy that explores the relationships between questions and their answers.

The purpose of teaching the QAR strategy is to show students that questions and answers have a variety of sources, and that learning about questions and their answers will help them, as readers, become better at understanding and answering questions.

- **Summarization (GIST)**

GIST (Generating Interactions between Schemata and Text) is a summarizing strategy to use to assist students' comprehension and summary writing skills. Students use higher-order thinking skills to analyze and synthesize what they have read. The summary is usually limited to no more than fifteen words; therefore, the students must analyze ways to delete non-essential information and use their own words to summarize the main idea or "the gist" of the selection (Cunningham, 1982).

- **Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI)**

CORI is an approach to reading instruction that helps children learn about scientific subjects while exploring non-fiction books. It consists of a set of instructional principles, as well as the developmental phases of reading and content learning instruction.

The unique characteristics of CORI include its emphasis on curricular coherence and student motivation to read and learn. Instructional coherence in CORI is operationalized by "nurturing sustained student engagement with content

material, by assisting students with making connections across texts and across subject areas, by helping students see the transferability of the strategies that they are mastering, and by guiding students in building upon prior knowledge and interests" (Stoller, 2004, 271).

- **Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR)**

Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) teaches students to use comprehension strategies (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) while working cooperatively (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Students of mixed achievement levels apply comprehension strategies while reading content area text in small groups of five students each.

Initially, the teacher presents the strategies (preview, click and clunk, get the gist, and wrap up) to the whole class using modeling, role playing, and teacher think-alouds. After students have developed proficiency applying the strategies through teacher-facilitated activities, the teacher asks them to form heterogeneous groups, where each student performs a defined role as students collaboratively implement the strategies (Klingner & Vaughn, 1998).

- **Explicit Instruction**

Explicit instruction provides teachers with a lesson structure for explaining and demonstrating the application of reading concepts, processes, skills, and strategies that are invisible to many students. It also provides a structure for coaching students to a high level of performance and cognitive control with these essential tools of proficient readers. Some students will have discovered these and become very proficient in their use. For other students, strategies such as using sight words and knowledge of how onsets and rimes work to decode unfamiliar words, or mining the full text as they gather information about the meaning of an unfamiliar word, will be new content. One of the major instructional purposes for using explicit instruction is to model and explain how reading works. Of course, our long term goal is for students to apply the targeted concept, process, skill, or strategy appropriately and automatically in real reading situations and to know how and why it works for them.

Models

- **Picture Word Inductive Model (PWIM)**

The picture word inductive model is an inquiry-oriented language arts strategy that employs photographs containing familiar objects, actions, and scenes to elicit words in children's listening and speaking vocabulary. This model helps students add words to their sight reading vocabulary, as well as their writing vocabulary. It also helps students discover phonetic and structural principles present in those words. This model includes both explicit instruction and concept formation lessons and is a multidimensional approach to literary development, one which encourages the use and integration of all actions and strategies emphasized in Every Child Reads. PWIM requires continuous modeling of reading and writing by the teacher and can also be used to teach students how to use observation and analysis in their study of reading and writing, as well as in comprehending and composing (Calhoun, 1999).



References

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